



Dale Dixon
Executive Director

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**Comments to USDA Under Secretary, Mark Rey at the 2007 Farm Bill Forum
Eastern Idaho State Fair, Blackfoot, Idaho
September 6, 2005**

By Dale Dixon, Executive Director, Idaho Rural Partnership

Good afternoon, Mr. Under Secretary and welcome to Idaho. My name is Dale Dixon and I serve as Executive Director of Idaho's Rural Development Council. We call it Idaho Rural Partnership.

I am both humbled and excited to be part of this state's history of partnership and collaboration in support of rural Idaho. We are grateful to our congressional delegation, including Senator Larry Craig, who played an important role in authorizing the Partnership in the 2002 Farm Bill. The Farm Bill and Governor Dirk Kempthorne's Executive Order continue a strong spirit of working together to accomplish great things for Idaho.

I'd like to spend a moment talking about rural economic growth.

The stakeholders around this table we call the Idaho Rural Partnership are actively involved. Many are represented here today. They are truly vested in the process along with private, local, state and federal representatives.

I want to recognize the people – because it is the people, working together, joining resources, who are able to address the challenges facing our neighbors throughout the rural parts of this state.

In fact, 88-percent of Idaho is rural. Much of that land is federally owned. The Profile of Rural Idaho – which is a joint project involving IRP sums up the issue: Growing urban populations are seeking to use rural resources for multiple purposes other than those that have sustained rural economies in the past. Discussions continue about how to give rural Idahoans a greater voice in managing the state's abundant public lands.

One of our partners – Idaho's counties – is actively involved in the process of making recommendations to Governor Kempthorne regarding roadless designations in Idaho's wilderness.

However, we must foster the evolutionary process that will keep agriculture and natural resource based industries vital parts of this economy – and a way of life for so many who call rural Idaho home. That's why partnership between the Idaho National Laboratory and ag and natural resource groups is critical. New technologies in crop production, domestic energy creation and bio-technologies can easily migrate from the laboratory just north of here to fields throughout the state.

We ask USDA to continue its tradition of supporting these types of collaborations. Please reauthorize the National Rural Development Partnership language; and we ask for USDA to support funding for the Partnership through an appropriation.

Thank you for your time.

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